

BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Umatilla Generating Project

AGENCY: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Department of Energy

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321)

SUMMARY: BPA intends to prepare an EIS on an electrical interconnection requested by Umatilla Generating Company, L.P. to integrate electrical power from the Umatilla Generating Project into the federal transmission grid. Electrical power from the Umatilla Generating Project would enter the federal transmission grid at BPA's McNary Substation. BPA proposes to execute an agreement with Umatilla Generating Company, L.P. to provide the latter with an interconnection. The EIS will assess the environmental consequences of the agreement and of any modifications to the transmission system needed to provide an electrical connection under the terms of the agreement. In addition to these federal actions, the EIS will consider the environmental consequences of construction and operation of the Umatilla Generating Project.

DATES: BPA has established a 45-day scoping period beginning on the date this notice is published in the Federal Register. During the scoping period, affected landowners, concerned citizens, special interest groups, local governments and any other interested parties are invited to comment on the scope of the proposed EIS. Scoping will help BPA ensure that a full range of issues related to this proposal is addressed in the EIS, and also will identify significant or potentially significant environmental impacts that may result from the proposed project. Written comments should be sent to the address below.

Comments may also be made at an EIS open house to be held at Hermiston High School on January 30, 2001 from 7 to 9 pm. The high school is located at 600 S. First Street, Hermiston, OR 97838. At the meeting, representatives of BPA and the Umatilla Generating Company, L.P. will be available to discuss the proposed project and the topics to be addressed in the EIS. Information on the proposed project will be available for review. BPA staff will answer questions and accept oral and written comments.

The draft (DEIS) will be circulated for review and comment and BPA will hold a public comment meeting for the DEIS. BPA will consider and respond to comments received on the DEIS in the final EIS.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND COMMENTS: BPA invites comments and suggestions on the proposed scope of the DEIS. For further information or to make a comment or suggestion please:

Call us toll free:
1-800-622-4519

Write to us:
P.O. Box 12999
Portland, OR 07212

E-mail us:
Comment@bpa.gov

Additional information can be found at BPA's web site: <http://www.bpa.gov>

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed project that is the subject of this EIS has several components. They include an electrical connection at BPA's McNary Substation for the Umatilla Generating Company, L.P., a natural gas-fired combined-cycle combustion turbine electric power generation plant (Umatilla Generating Project), a natural gas pipeline, and new and modified electric power transmission lines.

The Umatilla Generating Project is proposed by the Umatilla Generating Company, L.P., an independent power producer. Umatilla Generating Company, L.P. would build and operate the power plant. It would also pay for the construction of approximately three-quarters of a mile of new transmission lines and modification of approximately 11 miles of existing transmission lines owned by the Umatilla Electric Cooperative. The new transmission lines would be owned by the Umatilla Electric Cooperative. PG&E Gas Transmission-Northwest Corporation (GTN) or Cascade Natural Gas would build a natural gas pipeline to supply fuel to the power plant that would be up to five miles in length.

A. Proposed Action

The proposed Umatilla Generating Project would be a combustion turbine/combined cycle electric power plant with a nominal generating capacity of 550 MW. The energy facility site would be located about four miles southwest of the city of Hermiston and about one-half mile west of the existing Hermiston Generating Plant.

The proposed Umatilla Generating Project would consist of two essentially identical combustion turbine generators, two heat recovery steam generators (HRSG) and one steam turbine. The proposed generating project would be fueled by natural gas from the existing

GTN pipeline that passes approximately five miles south of the energy facility site. Natural gas would be burned in the combustion turbines. Expanding gases from combustion would turn rotors within the turbines that are connected to electric generators. The hot gases exhausted from the combustion turbines would be used to raise steam in the HRSGs. Steam from the HRSGs would be expanded through a steam turbine that drives its own electric generator.

Water would be needed at the facility to generate steam and cool the steam process. Water would be supplied from the Port of Umatilla's regional water supply pipeline that currently extends to the Hermiston Generating Plant. A recirculating cooling system employing mechanically induced draft evaporative cooling towers would be used to minimize water use. Water would be added to the cooling system to compensate for evaporative losses (make-up water) and blowdown. Blowdown is the water bled from the cooling system to limit the build up of salts. Blowdown would be conveyed by pipeline to Madison Farms, located approximately three miles south of the proposed generating project, where it would be applied to crops.

The proposed Umatilla Generating Project would deliver electric power to the regional power grid at the Bonneville Power Administration's McNary Substation in Umatilla using the Umatilla Electric Cooperative's (UEC's) existing Westland-McNary Transmission Line. A new 230 kV radial transmission line-tap would be constructed to connect the switchyard at the proposed Umatilla Generating Project to the Westland-McNary Transmission Line. Presently, the transmission line consists of one 115 kV circuit and one 230 kV circuit. The existing 115 kV line would be removed and replaced with a 230 kV line. BPA will make modifications to the McNary Substation to accept electric power from the Umatilla Generating Project.

In addition, the section of the 115 kV transmission line between the Umatilla Generating Project and the Hermiston Generating Plant would be reconductored for 230 kV. This portion of the circuit reconductoring would increase the overall efficiency and reliability of the transmission line.

All proposed facilities are located within Umatilla County, Oregon.

B. Process to Date

BPA has assumed the role of lead agency for the project EIS. The State of Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) is currently evaluating Umatilla Generating Company, L.P.'s Application for a Site Certificate for the Umatilla Generating Project. Oregon's site evaluation process, like NEPA, provides opportunity for public participation. Umatilla Generating Company, L.P. held a public informational meeting on December 7, 2000.

Umatilla Generating Company, L.P. expects to submit an application for Air Contaminant Discharge and Prevention of Significant Deterioration permits for the proposed project to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in January 2001.

C. Alternatives Proposed for Consideration

Alternatives thus far identified for evaluation in the EIS are: (1) the proposed action; and (2) no action. Other alternatives may be identified through the scoping process.

D. Identification of environmental issues

BPA plans to prepare an EIS addressing both the Umatilla Generating Project and the associated electric power interconnection facilities. BPA decided to prepare the EIS for two reasons: (1) the Umatilla Generating Project would depend on BPA's transmission grid to deliver power to consumers; and (2) no other federal or state agency is currently preparing an EIS on the proposed project. Because no other EIS is being prepared, the scope of BPA's EIS will cover both the interconnection elements and the Umatilla Generating Project.

The principal issues identified thus far for consideration in the DEIS with respect to the Umatilla Generating Project are as follows: (1) air quality impacts; (2) noise impacts from plant operation; (3) aesthetic impacts; (4) socioeconomic impacts created by an influx of construction workers into a sparsely populated area; and (5) impacts on wildlife habitat. The principal issues identified thus far for consideration in the DEIS with respect to the electric power transmission facilities are as follows: (1) impacts of transmission line construction on wetlands and wildlife habitat; (2) aesthetic impacts; and (3) cultural resource impacts.

These issues, together with any additional issues identified through the scoping process would be examined in the EIS.

Issued in Portland, Oregon on December --, 2000.

Administrator